

THE OBSERVER

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■ AND IN THIS CORNER...

A four-day holiday: Let us give Thanks

Let me begin by extending apologies to Professor Rice and particularly to Fred Kelly. I in no way meant to vilify Mr. Kelly or to endorse vilification; I also want to make clear that I support the freedom of speech in every way. Of course, I vehemently disagree with nearly everything the aforementioned two have to say, but as Voltaire said, "I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Matthew Apple

End of concessions.

Originally I wanted to write about Thanksgiving;

about how few people know that it was instituted as a national holiday by Abraham Lincoln at the insistence of the author of "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and how FDR pushed the date back one week to lengthen the Christmas shopping season, and how now everyone seems to use it merely as another excuse to watch non-stop football and get drunk and join the madding crowds in malls across this great land of ours — but I couldn't think of anything interesting enough about it to write nine hundred words.

I've also been fighting a wicked cold brought on primarily by my apartment's single-pane windows and rapidly spreading mildew, which, combined with an inability to sleep, would take the edge off of any verbal haranguing I could possibly devise on any topic. So, I'm afraid this week's column may be a bit more incoherent than it usually is.

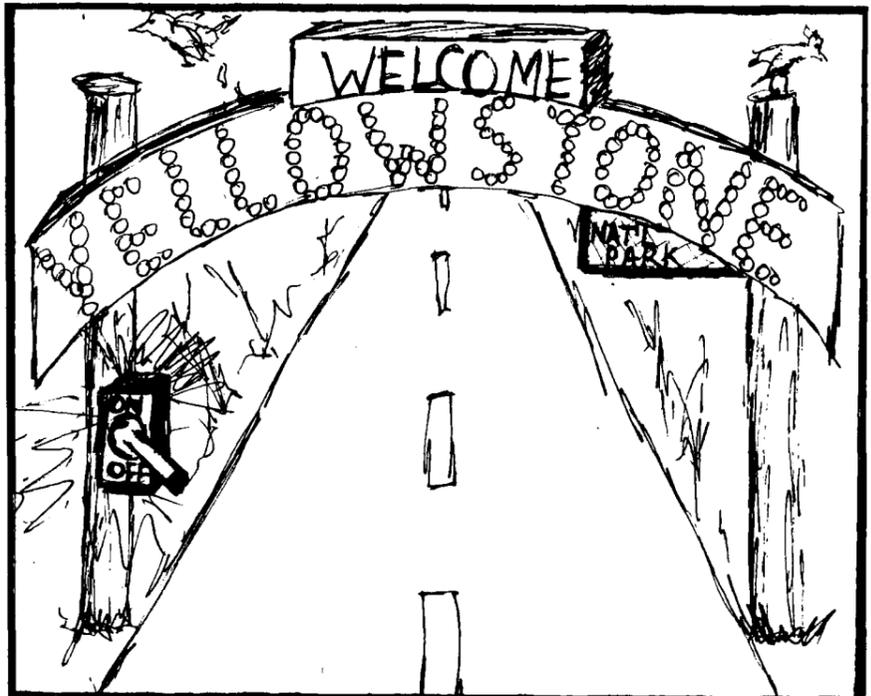
While I'm at it, I'd like to quash the notion of a colleague of mine who thinks I think I'm Dave Barry. I write nothing like Dave Barry. I haven't got a single balding guy or marriage joke in me.

Speaking of jokes, I could write about the "shut down" of the federal government this past week, but that's sort of a non-issue for me. To be honest, I didn't even realize the government had shut down until it was two days into it. It still doesn't come as much of a surprise. Apparently wouldbe international travelers were disgruntled that the passport offices were closed. Well, everyone knew as far back as July that the budget debate was going to get ugly. It's not as if you couldn't get a passport a few months ahead of time. Frankly, I'm

hoping this fiasco will show American voters just how useless and unnecessary government and politics are in the end. I don't see any great crisis around here.

I do feel some sort of sympathy for the thousands of "furloughed" federal workers, most of whom undoubtedly have families to feed. I feel somewhat less sympathy for the laid-off workers of the Social Security department. My tax money goes to pay 50,000+ workers to write 2,000,000+ checks using more of my tax money for a program that never should have been started in the first place and most likely will no longer exist by the time I'm any where near considering retirement.

And I feel absolutely no sympathy at all for certain furloughed workers of the Armed Forces, such as the man ESPN interviewed during the Air Force game. This guy from Air Force's "Sports Information Bureau" was whining because his job had been deemed "non-essential." What a lame job. I'd say it's pretty much a waste of taxpayer money to pay some guy to supply Air Force football statistics to the media. Even more ridiculous, the federal government



pays for the upkeep of the military mascots, Army's donkeys. Navy's goats and Air Force's falcons, not to mention the vehicles and the gas wasted when cadets play pranks by stealing other academy's mascots. Utter foolishness. Those stupid goats probably receive better health care than the entire lower quartile of the American population.

Next on today's untidy agenda, I hear a few students have to walk from the parking lot to class. Someone even took the time and care to measure to the second how long it takes to walk from the student parking lot to Hesburgh and La Fortune. Poor babies. Guess you'd better start wearing gloves. I walk twenty minutes to campus twice a day, and I know students who walk farther than I do. A ten minute walk is not going to give you killer frostbite if you're wearing winter

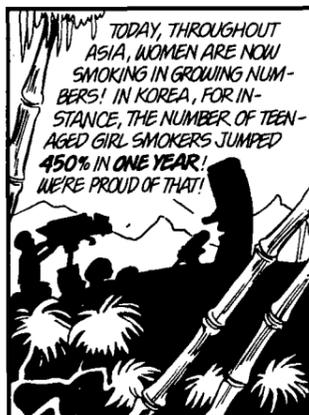
clothing. It takes longer sometimes to walk between classes. At worst you'll have to get up a few minutes earlier in the morning.

And, finally, I will refrain from commenting in these pages upon any publications produced by ultra-right wing, Cross-kissing, Bible-thumping extremists. They're just not worth my attention. It's pointless to waste time trying to establish a dialog with someone who is convinced they have all the answers *a priori*. Plus, I'm allergic to fascists. In fact, I think I feel a sneeze coming...

Matthew Apple is a Creative Writing graduate student at Notre Dame. Leave a message at the sound of the hacking and coughing at matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu.

■ DOONESBURY

GARRY TRUDEAU



■ QUOTE OF THE DAY

"And to give thanks is good, and to forgive."

—Algernon Charles Swinburne